

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 24-27, 29-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 (a) as being anticipated by **Kara**, PCT Publication WO 99/21330. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 28 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) as being unpatentable over **Kara**, PCT Publication WO 99/21330.

The present invention is directed to a system and method for providing a value added service associated with the delivery of a mail piece. The value added service is **response message** from the recipient of a mail piece to the originator of the mail piece that includes a scanned image of the mail piece, an image of the recipients signature indicating receipt of the mail piece and **a personal message from the recipient created at the time of receipt of the mail piece.**

Kara does not disclose or suggest combining a captured electronic image of the mail piece, a captured image of the recipient's signature at the time of delivery **and a captured response message, which is composed by the recipient when the mail piece is delivered**, to form an electronic message response acknowledging receipt of the mail piece.

Kara is directed to a system and method for transmission of a document from a sending location to a receiving location by way of a trusted way location. A document is physically or electronically transmitted by a sending location to a letter server operated by a delivery service. A confirmation of transmission of the document is provided to the sender by the delivery service. Thereafter, the letter server reproduces the document in original quality, accompanied by any necessary items such as a delivery container and/or delivery instructions. The delivery service then delivers the reproduced document such as through electronic delivery or inducting the reproduced document into its delivery paradigm for physical delivery to the indicated recipient. (See the abstract.) According to Kara, the document at some point in the process is in electronic form so that it can be transmitted to the receiving location as shown in Fig. 1. See page 7, first paragraph, where Kara provides the following. However, it shall be appreciated that the present invention's electronic induction into the postal system at a point early in the paradigm and/or direct electronic delivery to the postal office nearest the recipient avoids the handling and transportation

delays introduced in the above described posting of mail. According to the present invention, the document need only be sorted at the way location, i.e., the postal office, in order to be electronically inducted or be associated with the proper carrier to physically deliver the document. If proof of delivery is desired, such as through the use of a return receipt, or special delivery is required, such as registered delivery or expedited delivery, such can be noted at the time of receipt at the way location. Thereafter, the delivery of the document may be handled accordingly

Referring to the Examiner's comments concerning the first element of claim 24, the Examiner relied on Kara, page 27, lines 7-17 to disclose that an electronic image of the mail piece is captured. Applicant respectfully disagrees. The text referred to by the Examiner does not disclose or suggest capturing an electronic image of the mail piece. The image in of the mail piece is captured earlier in the process before the mail piece is delivered. At page 27, lines 7-17, Kara discloses including a "code" in the confirmation message, such as a "two dimensional bar code" containing not only relating to the size, date/time of the transmission, and sender and/or receiver information, "but also information from which the complete document may be later produced". The description of the code and its purpose does not disclose or suggest sending an image of the mail piece back to the originator as part of a confirmation or return receipt.

Referring to the Examiner's comments concerning the third element of claim 24, the Examiner, relied on Kara, page 27, lines 19-21 and page 37, lines 19-20 to disclose capturing a response message composed by the recipient when the mail piece is delivered. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Kara does not disclose capturing a response message composed by the recipient at the time of delivery. The confirmation of transmission in Kara (page 27, lines 19-21) is not a message composed by the recipient. Instead, Kara discloses a typical confirmation of transmission in electronic or hard copy form. Kara also discloses the same at page 37, lines 19-20.

Of course, regardless of establishing the correlation between the transmitted document and received document, the present invention may operate to provide a receipt of actual delivery to the recipient of the transmitted document to the sender. This receipt may be communicated to the sender along the reverse path of the transmission of the document by the sender or may be by a different path. This receipt may include an acknowledgment of delivery by the recipient. In the case of electronic transmission, this acknowledgement may be in the form of a digital

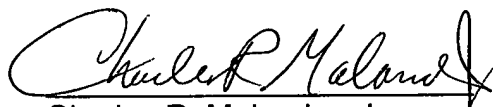
signature provided by, or associated with, the aforementioned authentication information

Referring to the Examiner's comments concerning the fourth element of claim 24, the Examiner, relied on Kara, page 37, lines 7-21 to disclose combining the captured electronic image of the mail piece, the captured image of the recipient's signature and the captured response message to form an electronic message response acknowledging receipt of the mail piece. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Since Kara does not disclose capturing a response message composed by the recipient at the time of delivery, Kara does not disclose the combination set forth in this element of claim 24.

For at least the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 24 is allowable over the prior art of record. Claims 25-32, which are dependent upon claim 24, are allowable along with claim 24 and on their own merits.

Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration is respectfully requested. If any unresolved issues remain, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone the undersigned attorney at (203) 924-3217 so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully submitted,



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